CHAPTER VI

PEASANTS AND WORKERS PARTY
OVER the matter of policies and priorities a sizeable number of Congressmen in Bombay province seceded from the parent body and constituted themselves into the Peasants and Workers Party in 1948. Prominent leaders of these seceding congressmen were Keshavrao Jedhe, Shankarrao More and Tulshi-das Jadhav. Soon after its formation the Peasants and Workers Party posed a serious political threat to the ruling party in Maharashtra, for some time. What led to the formation of the PWP in Bombay province in 1948? What role did Keshavrao Jedhe play in laying the foundations of the PWP and consolidating its position in the province? What was the nature of Jedhe-More differences? Why did Keshavrao Jedhe quit the PWP after six years of active association with it? etc. are the important questions to which an attempt has been made in the present chapter, to find answers.

Keshavrao Jedhe was a great champion of the peasants' cause. He constantly endeavoured to solve their problems. He worked very hard to create an awakening among the peasant masses. As he was born in a peasant family he was aware of the miserable conditions of the peasants. The peasants had always been harassed by economic exploitation, lack of education, burden of government taxes and the recurring famines. Jedhe openly and publicly undertook the task of representing and redressing the grievances of the peasants.
Parts of Nagar and Poona districts were hit by severe drought in 1920. At that time Keshav Rao Jedhe and his brother along with Maharshi Shinde participated in implementing famine relief measures for ameliorating the conditions of the peasants and the untouchables.\(^2\)

In 1927 Sir Chunilal Mehta, the then Home Minister of Bombay Presidency, introduced the 'Small Holding Bill' in the legislature. This was against the interests of the peasants. Immediately following this bill the government proposed to increase the land tax. Keshav Rao launched an agitation against these two decisions. On 25th July, 1928, Jedhe brothers convened at Pune the Bombay Presidency Peasants' Conference. A morcha (demonstration) of about 5000 peasants was taken to the Council Hall in Poona. Keshav Rao had himself organised a number of meetings in Poona district to protest against the proposed increase in the land tax. Because of opposition from all political parties and the agitation opposing both the bill as well as land tax increase, the government withdrew the small holding bill. All the expenses towards the peasants' conference in Poona were borne by Jedhe brothers.\(^3\)

Keshav Rao used to provide boarding and lodging facilities to many peasants visiting 'Jedhe Mansion'. He also strove to remove their difficulties. The peasant community in Maharashtra had always been following Jedhe because of his selfless service to the peasant cause.
Mahatma Gandhi transformed the more political character of the Congress movement and added to it the additional planks of social, economic and educational reforms. Congress under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership showed favourable response to the demands of social reforms made by the non-Brahmans. Congress sympathetically heeded to the problems of the peasants and workers. Because of this Keshavrao Jedhe and his non-Brahman followers turned towards Congress under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership.

In Lucknow session of the Congress in 1935 a resolution accepting agricultural development programme was passed. Also in Faijpur session of the Congress held in 1936 such a resolution was passed. This further strengthened optimism and faith of the non-Brahman leaders in the Congress.

Provincial Elections of 1946

Keshavrao Jedhe and his associates were under the impression that the Congress Party and its leadership would solve problems of the peasants and workers. These expectations were not fulfilled. When national freedom of our country was within sight the Congress leaders, instead of concentrating on constructive programmes, indulged more in power politics. The elections to the Central Legislative Council had been held in November, 1945 and the preparations for the provincial legislative council elections had been commenced. Deo group, in the Provincial Congress shrewdly managed to control the party parliamentary board and
distributed many of the party tickets to its adherents. Jedhe group wanted that party candidatures should be conferred on such party workers who would ably represent the interests of the peasants and workers and fight in the legislature to safeguard them. But Jedhe's views were ignored while preparing a list of party candidates.

In March 1946, the elections to the Bombay Provincial Legislative Council were held. Congress won 128 out of total 175 seats, 30 seats went to the Muslim league. Deo, Devgirikar R.G. Soman etc. had taken care to secure party tickets for their supporters and therefore forward a dominant group in the council. Eventually Balasaheb Kher got reelected as Chief Minister (State C.M. was designated as Prime Minister at that time) and Jedhe group was totally ignored in the formation of the ministry.

The Kher government failed to fulfill the expectations of the people who were nurtured on the promises of socialism. Land reform policy framed by the government was not at all satisfactory and the businessmen and industrialists were trying to accrue benefits. The Congress government in Bombay Province bore the stamp of the capitalists. Common man's cherished dream of socialist Congress rule was thus slowly but rudely being shattered.

Conflicts between the Party wing and the Government

Congress ministry in Bombay province stated functioning from March 1946. Its working was quite in-
efficient and ineffective and so the ministry tended to function according to whims of the bureaucracy. This alienated it from the common masses. The government cared more for the capitalist interests and the poor continued to suffer. None bothered for the welfare of the peasants and workers. Keshavrao Jedhe and his followers could not remain passive spectators under such circumstances. In the Congress committee meeting as well as outside it, he started criticising the functioning of Kher Cabinet. In Kher ministry there was no adequate representation to leaders of the common masses and so the expectations of Keshavrao and his associates that the Congress ministry would function in favour of the peasants, workers and the poor and that the deprived would receive due justice, were not fulfilled. Consequently Keshavrao Jedhe, Tulshidas Jadhav, Shankarrao More, Bhausaheb Raut etc. decided to contest party elections and capture the party organization of the provincial level. As the common masses followed Keshavrao Jedhe and as he then wielded powerful personal influence in the Congress Organization, Jedhe group secured a majority in the party organizational election. During those days, the Bombay Provincial Congress had three groups. The first group was of Shankarrao Deo and it consisted mostly of Marwaris, Gujarathis and Brahmans. The second was of Jedhe and Gadgil, mostly consisting of peasants and workers. The third group consisted mostly of the socialists. Later three candidates contested the election for the presidency of the Bombay Provincial Congress. Raosaheb Patwardhan of the
socialists group, Shankarrao Deo of the Gandhites and Keshavrao Jedhe himself from Jedhe group entered the struggle. Eventually, in May 1946, Keshavrao Jedhe again became president of the Provincial Congress Committee. When the party organization thus passed under its control, Jedhe group began to recommend to the government various welfare measures for the uplift of the common people. But Prime Minister Kher and his political mentor Shri Deo began to ignore these recommendations. And the conflict between the organizational wing and the government was further aggraved.10

Jedhe - More group expressed dissatisfaction over the style of functioning of both the Central and State governments in many respects. They felt that the governments had failed to expell or even to keep down the capital and communal forces and that they also failed to proceed along the socialist lines. This was their prime allegation against the government. Jedhe - More group also felt that the government did not work satisfactorily in removing poverty, in solving the problems of the toiling masses on priority basis, in abolishing the privileges of the princes, in adopting progressive attitudes and policies relating to interests of the peasants and workers and also in the nationalization of industries.11

People also realized that the expectations held by these men (Jedhe group) were being gradually shattered by
the Congress Party. Though there used to be occasional discussion on socialism in the meetings of the Congress, however, nothing concrete was achieved at the implementation level. On the contrary capitalists like Walchand Hirachand, Cooper, Jamnalal Bajaj were tightening their hold on the Congress. Shri Jedhe was upset over it. He was of the view that the Congress should work for the progress of the peasants who toiled on the soil. However, the Congress chose to ignore the peasant interests. Consequently Shri Jedhe, Bhausaheb Raut, Tulshidas Jadhav, Bapusaheb Bhapkar, Shankarrao More, Datta Deshmukh who were keen to safeguard peasant interests started coming together. R.K. Khadilkar while commenting upon Jedhe's activities wrote "In the mean time Shri Jedhe had started establishing peasants' unions in various villages. It was so, because, so far, nobody had organised the peasants and the farm-labourers. So they responded well. Thousands of peasants from various villages used to come in their bullock-carts to attend Shri Jedhe's meetings. These illiterate and poor people had now come to know who their real wellwisher was".

As the Kher ministry between 1937 and October 1939 had failed to fulfil the promise made to be people similarly it again failed to do so in 1946. This provided the Jedhe group with opportunities to criticise the government severely of and on.
Shetkari Kamgar Sangh (Peasants and Workers Organization)

Leaders like Keshavrao Jedhe, Tulshidas Jadhav, Shankarrao More were frustrated to see that the Congress government failed to solve problems of the peasants and workers. They also noticed that the Congress government failed to check the capitalist forces and also to prepare welfare plans for the progress of common man. The reactionary policies and narrow politics of Deo and Devqirikar made it very difficult for leaders of the masses to work in the party organization. These leaders were in a mood to form a peasant organization within the party from where they could express their views openly and criticize the reactionary policies occasionally adopted by the Congress and also guide the party along socialistic lines and make it solve problems of the peasants and workers. Many other organizations of the youths, women, students and the trade union were functioning within the Congress fold. Then why there should not be an organization for the peasants and workers was the issue raised for consideration by Tulshidas Jadhav before Jedhe, More and Others. They immediately agreed to his idea of having a separate organization of the peasants and workers.

Day by day the relations between the party wing and the ministry were strained more and more. Out of this conflict the idea of peasant organization began to take concrete shape. Many began to feel that in order to exercise pressure on government to implement the measures for the betterment of
common men, zealous legislators and party workers must organize themselves. On 26th July 1946, a meeting of some party legislators and workers was held at the residence of Baburao Sanas. Activists like Keshavrao Jedhe, Shankarrao More, Nana Patil and legislators like Chhannusinh, Tulshidas Jadhav, Shri Bhapkar, Shri Datta Deshmukh, Shri Vyankatrao Pawar, P.K.Sawant etc. attended the meeting. In this meeting it was decided to appoint a committee to start a newspaper with a view to representing grievances of the peasants and getting them redressed and arranging propaganda campaigns of the peasant cell. But as this committee did come into being, another meeting of party workers and legislators was held on 11th November 1946 at Poona. It was attended by, Jedhe, More, Dnyanoba Jadhav and legislators like Bhausaheb Raut, R.N. Nalawade, Datta Deshmukh, P.K.Sawant, R.H.Shinde, Yashwantrao Chavan, Tulshidas Jadhav, K.D.Patil, Naval Patil etc. The following resolution was passed in the meeting "In order to make the political, social and economic programmes of the party more forceful and in favour of common men and especially to give concrete shape and speed to the Congress policies of establishing a rule of the peasants and workers, an organized force has become essential and so it was resolved that this organization is formed within Congress". This resolution clearly embodied the objects of 'Shetkari Kamgar Sangh'. It was further resolved that the workers should arrange meetings in villages and explain to the villagers the role of the peasant organization.
As decided in this meeting, Keshavrao Jedhe and Shankarrao More began to speak openly about the role of peasant organization. Likewise some of the legislators began criticizing the policies of the ministry in the legislature party meetings. This invited criticism from Deo and Devgirikar group on 'Shetkari Kamgar Sangh'. Therefore, on 11th Jan, 1947 a meeting of the party workers was held at Bhausaheb Raut's residence to have a stronger organization with wider base. This meeting was attended by 75 party workers including Jedhe, R.K. Khadilkar, Bhai Kadu, P.K. Atre, Yashavantrao Chavan, Sonusingh Patil, Tulshidas Jadhav, Datta Deshmukh, Bhausaheb Raut, R.M. Nalawade. In the meeting, Keshavrao Jedhe, P.K. Atre, Shankarrao More, Tulshidas Jadhav etc. insisted on the necessity of having within the party an organization working for welfare of the peasants and workers. Whereas Yashavantrao Chavan and Sonusingh Patil said that there was no necessity of such an organization.

As two different lines of opinion emerged in the meeting, Chhannusingh appealed to the members to consider a stand of reconciliation and subsequently the following resolution was passed in the meeting: "According to the ideals of the Congress, the day to day functioning of the Congress may be carried out for the benefit of the common people, and the party workers who participate in the functioning may be given proper guidance. Likewise when the power is transferred from the British hands such power should be used for the benefit of
the peasants and workers; and out of it the peasants and workers organization should become strong enough to wield power in its hands. However for this, concerted efforts are necessary. With this object in view a committee, to chalk out the programmes to be carried out for the welfare of the peasants and workers may be appointed. Later Bhausaheb Raut and Shankarrao More issued a circular and called a meeting of their supporters at Alandi on 2nd February 1947 and in it founded a faction within the Congress Party. This meeting was attended by 23 leaders among whom were Keshavrao Jedhe, Shankarrao More, Bhausaheb Raut, Krishnarao Dhulip, P.K.Sawant, Datta Deshmukh, G.D.Lad and Khadilkar. In this meeting a committee of nine members under the chairmanship of Shankarrao More was appointed to frame the constitution and programmes of the peasants and workers organization within the Congress. Eventually on 12th September 1947, this organization was formally set up.

The peasants and workers organization, after its formal establishment, received tremendous response from the people. On 9th November 1947, a convention of supporters from Nagpur, Varhad, Marathwada and other parts of Maharashtra was held at Ahmednagar. This convention approved the constitution and programmes of the organization.

Congress Opposition to Shetkari Kamgar Sangh

When Shetkari Kamgar Sangh within Congress acquired a definite shape and an intellectual base, its leaders under-
took campaigns to propagate its policy among the common masses. Through these campaigns, they exposed the pro-capitalist policies of the Congress government. In the propaganda campaigns these leaders stressed on such points as problems of the peasants; Government's apathy towards those problems and the probable solutions of such problems.18

Keshavrao Jedhe continued criticising the Kher ministry. In a public meeting held at Sholapur on 2nd February 1948 and also in a peasant rally held at Mahud in Pandharpur Taluka (now Mahud is in Sangola Taluka of Solapur district.) Keshavrao Jedhe severely criticized the Kher government.21 Keshavrao Jedhe presided over the party meeting held on 6th November 1947 in the Congress Bhavan at Poona. Morarji Desai was one the speakers and he was speaking on "Attacks on Indian independence". In the course of his speech he said, "Congress ministry alone will work for the welfare of the peasants and workers. But for achieving that there should be no trouble from the office-bearers of Congress committee". As soon as Keshavrao heard this, he striking the table with Morarji's stick sternly said, "This meeting is called not for merely listening to the praises of the government. Often we tell what the government has done and what it should have done for the peasant masses. The important question today is how to protect the peasants from the attacks to which they have been subjected. Morarji may speak on this".20 Jedhe was the first PCC Chief to thus scold a senior minister like Morarji Desai in a public meeting when he started signing the praise of Kher
ministry. This clearly shows Keshavrao Jedhe's fearlessness and straight forwardness.

The Provincial Congress was speaking of Championing the peasants' cause but it was not ready for direct action for it then. If Congress had protected the peasant interests it would have surely harmed the interests of the landlords. 'Jedhe-Raut-More' group had already launched the propaganda campaigns for the peasants' organization and capitalistic attitude of the Congress government was being constantly exposed.

The peasant organization within the Congress party began to receive massive support. Frightened by the increasing popularity of the new subsidiary organization and sensing future troubles from it, 'Deo-Devgririkar group' began to oppose the new peasant organization set up by Jedhe, More and Tulshidas Jadhav. They began to give out that the new organization was a sort of rebellious activity against the Congress organization. This made, 'Jedhe-More-Jadhav' feel that the leadership of the common people would be thus endangered and accordingly they began to view the then prevailing situation from their own stand point.

Foundation of Peasants and Workers Party

The peasants' organization within the Congress was vehemently opposed by 'Deo-Devgririkar' group. The Bombay Provincial Congress was divided into three factions. They were - Deo, first 'Deo-Devgririkar' faction, the second faction of the
socialist workers, and third faction of Jedhe and his supporters. There was rivalry among these factions for supremacy and power. But the Jedhe faction was mainly engaged in solving the problems of the peasants and workers. 'Deo-Devghirikar' faction tried by fair or foul means to keep power in its hands. The 'Shetkari Kamgar Sangh' tried to insert some provisions in the constitution of the Congress organization to prevent entry of capitalist forces into the Congress. But their efforts proved abortive. The leaders like Deo, who called themselves Gandhians, were fed up with Jedhe's leadership. In those days Jedhe carried more influence than Deo in the Congress. Therefore, Deo group, comprehending the danger posed to its position in the party, opposed this group.

The All India Congress Committee which met in Bombay on 24th April 1948, made an amendment to the Congress constitution. The new amendment read, "No congressman shall become a member of another organization which has its own constitution and programmes of action". So rules were passed accordingly. Due to such change in the character and constitution of the Congress Party, the leftists within the Congress were left with no other alternative than to quit the party. Therefore, on 19th March, 1948, the socialist faction and on 13th May, 1948, the peasants and workers organization group left the Congress.

While discussing the circumstances which led the 'Jedhe-More-Jadhav' group to leave the Congress Shankarrao More wrote "As we were convinced that to remain in Congress
under such circumstances amounted to the betrayal of the peasants and workers, we left the Congress." He has further mentioned five reasons of their leaving the Congress. They are: (1) Sarvoday ideals have now been incorporated in Congress constitution. It is nothing but the new edition of the principle of class reconciliation. Unless the class of capitalists and feudal-lords is destroyed through class struggle, rule of the peasants and workers would be impossible. (2) The Congress constitution has forbidden factions within the party. (3) Congress is passing under the control of the capitalists, landlords and former princes. (4) Congress is full of power-seekers. (5) In democracy opposition parties are essential and the leftists should accept this role. 25

Keshavrao Jedhe, while discussing the nature of the Congress in those days, said, "It is simply foolishness and hypocrisy to argue that we are serving the cause of the peasants and workers while remaining in such a party. Had we remained in the Congress we would have become slaves of the capitalists or our struggles with the pro-capitalists would have been intensified." 26 In this way, Jedhe, More, Jadhav and their colleagues decided to quit the Congress. For this purpose of 26th April, 1948 a meeting of 150 workers was held at Bhausaheb Raut's residence. A resolution embodying the decision to leave the Congress was passed unanimously. It was also decided that the members of the Shetkari and Kamgar Sangh must resign from the Congress before
31st May, 1948. After taking the decision to leave the Congress, on 13th June 1948, Shetkari Kamgar Sangh made amendments to its constitution and renamed itself as the peasants and workers party. At this critical juncture Shankarrao Deo made an appeal in which he stated, "As Jedhe desired, political power in the country will shortly pass into the hands of the common masses. So he should, by staying in the Congress, serve the cause of the masses and abide by party discipline". On his appeal, Jedhe laid down a condition that Congress must recognize this new party, and those who were leaving Congress should be recalled honourably. However, Jedhe later turned down that appeal stating, "It is true that Deo had appealed, but of late, as Deo behaves like Hitler in the Congress, I turn down his appeal". Yashwantrao Chavan did not quit Congress along with PWSP leaders. Although he found himself in sympathy with other PWSP leaders regarding their grievances against Kher ministry, he was not willing to fight against the Congress High Command. He and his followers were displeased because Deo had not chosen him for inclusion in the Kher Cabinet. Because of that he participated in the early meetings organized for founding the Peasants and Workers Party. But later he retracted his steps. Chavan was of the opinion that a change in the style of functioning of the Kher ministry can be brought about only by staying within Congress. He further argued that scope of the new party's will be limited to Maharashtra only and we should not thus alienate ourselves from the main steam of national life.
Dr. B. L. Bhole while analysing Chavan's changing attitude commented that the PW leader felt that when Jedhe, More etc. leaders of the masses left the Congress, a leadership vacuum would be created and the already shocked Congress leadership (shocked because of the founding of PWP) would have to woo other leaders from the masses to fill in the vacuum. They further argued that Chavan thought the situation would be beneficial for him. And so did he retrace his steps.

Chavan, who was with Jedhe, More and Jadhav in the early few meetings convened for founding the Peasants and Workers Party commented upon Jedhe's decision to quit the Congress. He, while speaking in a Congress meeting at Rajapur in this regard, said, "Today I am in the Congress and much of the credit for my being in the Congress should go to Keshav Rao Jedhe. It is unfortunate for the society at large that now he is speaking in terms of casteism and communalism. Keshav Rao should reconsider his decision of quitting the Congress." It is simply ridiculous that when Keshav Rao spoke about the welfare of the peasants and workers, Chavan should have described his speech as casteist and communalist.

Jedhe's exit from Congress gave an early opportunity for Y. B. Chavan's leadership to grow. After Jedhe's exit, though Bhausaheb Hire became President of the Provincial Congress Committee, he could not compete with Chavan. Within
short span of time Chavan emerged as the most prominent leader of Maharashtra Congress.

The changes which took place in the Provincial Congress Committee and which gave a new turn to Maharashtra politics in favour of common man, is an indirect effect produced by the establishment of the Peasants and Workers Party. Thus the reins of power and party organization, for the first time, passed into the hands of leaders of majority community in the province. Since long, Jedhe had been trying for this. But his efforts bore fruits only after his exit from the Congress. The so called intelligentsia in the Congress realized that they could no more carry on political activities with the help of secondary leadership of the masses. So they gave up the practice of holding power perpetually in their hands. This provided the necessary opportunity to the able leaders of the masses to come forward and prove their mettles.33

When the non-Brahman party built upon the ideology of Satyashodhak Samaj, began to show the signs of degeneration, Jedhe and Javalkar rebelled against it and carried out the historical task of reviving the original inspiration. Later, with the expectation of carrying out the work of Satyashodhak Samaj through Congress, Jedhe brought the non-Brahmans into the main stream of the Congress movement. As the non-Brahman movement turned into a group of power seekers about 1930, Congress also followed the same path after 19
When Jedhe realized this, he raised a voice of protest against the Congress and he got the necessary support from Shankarrao More, Tulshidas Jadhav etc. This led to the setting up of the Peasants and Workers Party in 1948. The non-Brahman party lost its vigour after Jedhe's joining the Congress, but same was not the case with Congress after Jedhe's exit from it in 1948.34

Even though Jedhe, More and Jadhav had named their new party on 13th June 1948, Nana Patil, who was present for the meeting in which the Peasants and Workers Party was founded, had not entered it. So Tulshidas Jadhav, Bhausaheb Raut, More etc., through Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil, persuaded him to join the Peasants and Workers Party and later on he joined it.35 Though Keshavrao Jedhe, Tulshidas Jadhav, More, Bhausaheb Raut etc., had left the Congress, they had not resigned their memberships in either Constituent Assembly or the Legislative Council. On 13th July, secretary of the Provincial Congress unit wrote to those who had left the party that as they had been elected on Congress tickets, they should resign their membership in the constituent assembly as well as the Legislative Council. As a reaction to this letter Shankarrao More wrote a letter to the Congress President Dr. Rajendra Prasad on 16th August, 1948. In it he wrote, "As Jedhe by nature shuns publicity, he avoids advertisement. Jedhe always tries to keep away from the top leaders of the Congress. If anybody else had the influence and popularity that he enjoys in the province as well as in
the organization certainly he would have tried to climb up
the ladder of political leadership. But Jedhe kept himself
away from important power positions. What Jedhe has not done,
has been well accomplished by Shankarrao Deo....If you feel
that Jedhe should resign and if you accordingly intimate, I
promise you, that Jedhe will act accordingly. However, he is
not willing to resign on the demand of Shankarrao Deo and
his followers." 36

First Convention of the PWP

The first convention of the Peasants and Workers Party
was held at Sholapur on 5th and 6th September 1948. Tulshidas
Jadhav by his sincere work had collected around himself a band
of devoted workers. He had also worked a lot among the
textile mill workers of Sholapur. He had gathered around him
young workers like Madhavrao Thite, Prabhakar Katke and
Vishwas Phate etc. About seven to eight hundred representa­
tives from all over Maharashtra attended the Sholapur conven­
tion. Madhavrao Bagal, the leader of Kolhapur Praja Parishad,
who was then just released from prison deliberately attended
the convention. While he was in prison, Yashavantrao Chavan
and Bhausheeb Hire called on him and invited him to join the
Congress. Madhavrao Bagal refused to enter the Congress and
instead joined the Peasants and Workers Party. 37 Thus Sholapur
convention of the party was a great success. This bears
testimony to the organizing skill and leadership of Tulshidas
Jadhav.
After the establishment of the P W P many Congressmen in Maharashtra began to join it. A meeting of workers from Marathwada was held and due to the initiative of Annasaheb Gavhane many workers joined the P W P. On 26th February 1949, Shankarrao More started 'Janasatta' a newspaper that served as the party mouthpiece. Within three months, it gathered about one thousand subscribers and its circulation went up to seven thousand. Peasants and Workers Party continued criticizing the working of Congress ministry in Bombay province. Bhausaheb Raut resigned his legislatorship on 10th April 1949 as a protest against the anti-people performance of the Congress ministry.

In order to explain the role of the Peasants and Workers Party to the rural masses, Keshavrao Jedhe, along with Nana Patil and Kakasaheb Wagh, toured Kolhapur and Poona districts in the month of April, May and June 1949 and effectively carried on the party propaganda. This tour was a great success. Meanwhile, a rumour was spread by the opponents and a news also appeared in 'Navbharat' of Bombay, that Nana Patil was going to leave the Peasants and Workers Party. Nana Patil strongly condemned it and stated "that the news is totally baseless and mischievous and by such virulent propaganda our party is not going to die." In December 1949, the P W P. contested two bye-elections - One each from Ahmednagar and Kolaba districts -
to the provincial legislature. From the constituency in
Nagar district Data Deshmukh had filed his nomination. But
in the scrutiny, his nomination was rejected. So Peasants
and Workers Party put up Bhau Balaji Jadhav as its candidate.
However, Jadhav lost the seat. Congress candidate Kolhe won
it. In Kolaba district, Bhausheb Raut could retain his seat
but with a narrow margin. This made the Peasants and Workers
Party leaders aware of the fact that it was not easy to fight
against the Congress. Although Jedhe and More had expected
that there would be large scale exodus from the Congress after
their exit from it, thing of the kind took place. 40

Dabhadi Convention

Keshavrao Jedhe, Shankarrao More, Tulshidas Jadhav
and many others were working vigorously for the spread of
the P.W.P. and carried on its propaganda. Their opponents
were engaged in carrying as false propaganda against the
P.W.P and spreading rumours that it was soon going to split.
Jedhe, More, Jadhav etc. were trying to make the Peasants
and Workers Party an equally strong opposition to the
Congress and they were busy in consolidating the party. The
second convention of the P.W.P. was held at Dabhadi in Nasik
district on 29th May 1950. Keshavrao Jedhe was chairman of
this convention. Dabhadi Thesis was accepted in this
convention. Keshavrao Jedhe said that the Peasants and Workers
Party must organize people's democratic front against Nehru
government which had aligned itself with the imperialist
powers like America and England. India should join the socialist block of Russia and China. The convention insisted upon learning the fundamental works on Marxism Leninism and seeking the guidance of 'Cominform' the international organization of the Communists. The draft of the thesis was prepared by the committee consisting of Dajiba Desai, Saththa and Tulpule.

The 'Cominform' was founded in 1947 by nine European communist countries, under the leadership of Russia. Shankarrao More had very thick relationship with Vishnupant Chitale, Vasantrao Tulpule etc. when the 'Cominform' indicated in its newspaper that Indian Communist Party would give up, after 1950, its extreme policies, Shankarrao More passed more under the influence of Communist Party.

Relationship with Socialist Party

The Peasants and Workers Party could not adjust itself with the Socialist Party. The socialist group in its meeting held at Nasik on 19th March, 1948, decided to quit the Congress. While commenting on Keshavrao Jedhe's stand at that time, socialist leader N.G.Gore stated, "Instead of founding a new party, Keshavrao and others desired to form an alliance with the socialist party. But More and Khadilkar opposed them. Besides Jedhe did not like the bitter opposition of the socialists to the Communists and the snobbish attitude of the socialists towards the Peasants and Workers Party. Therefore,
Jedhe could not go along with the socialists for long. Moreover, 'Dabhadi Thesis' severely criticized the socialists. Hence the Khandala agreement of mutual co-operation arrived at between the socialists and the Peasants and Workers Party in April 1950 lasted only for two and half months. On 29th July 1950 the agreement and also the alliance between the PWP and the socialists came to an end.43

PWP and Navjeevan Sanghatna

During the days of the Quit-India Movement of 1942, S.K.Limaye, Bhau Phatak, Santaram Patil etc. had been expelled from the Communist Party. They founded the 'Navjeevan Sanghatna'. Datta Deshmukh had an idea of absorbing the 'Navjeevan Sanghatna' in the Peasants and Workers Party. There was a lot of commotion in the Peasants and Workers Party on this issue.

In August 1950 after Datta Deshmukh's release from prison, this move got momentum. After the Wathar convention, Shankarrao More appealed to 'Navjeevan Sanghatna' to join the Peasants and Workers Party. After prolonged talks with Datta Deshmukh and Kakasaheb Wagh, 'Navjeevan Sanghatna' merged with the Peasants and Workers Party. But later events soon proved that it was not in the interests of the Peasants and Workers Party. Jedhe and More also began to feel the same. Because of this merger Datta Deshmukh group was further strengthened and within a short time intense conflict between Datta Deshmukh faction and 'Jedhe-More' faction commenced. Consequently on
14, 15 & 16 April 1951, the General Council of the Peasants and Workers Party in its meeting decided to expel from the party the members of 'Navjeevan Sanghatna' and its supporters like Datta Deshmukh, Kakasaheb Wagh and Nana Patil, Baburao Jedhe, Tulshidas Jadhav etc. tried to bring about a compromise between the two factions. Nana Patil and Kakasaheb Wagh suggested that the General secretaryship of the party should be transferred from Shankarrao More to Keshavrao Jedhe. But Shankarrao More did not agree to that. Nana Patil and Wagh felt that Shankarrao More's leadership was responsible for the split in the PWP and if Keshavrao Jedhe had not supported More, his side would not have gained so much strength. On 14, 15 October 1951 Datta Deshmukh faction assumed for itself the new name 'Kangar Kisan Paksh'.

The First General Election on 1952

In order to create a Democratic front to contest the first general elections of 1952 the Peasants and Workers Party tried to enter into electoral alliances with other parties. This party decided to contest some Loksabha seats and Assembly seats from Bombay, Hyderabad and Madhya Pradesh provinces. For the Poona Loksabha seat party nominated Keshavrao Jedhe to contest against Kakasaheb Gadgil. In fact, Jedhe did not wish to contest against Gadgil. Sholapur district was then the stronghold of the Peasants and Workers Party and More himself contested as the party candidate from Sholapur parliamentary constituency. The Peasants and Workers Party leaders held some
talks with the Scheduled Caste Federation and decided to support each other in some constituencies. Dr. Ambedkar gave his consent to this adjustment. For Poona Loksabha seat, Keshavrao Jedhe, Kakasaheb Gadgil and Socialist Party candidate S.M. Joshi contested. While describing the experiences of the election campaigns Kakasaheb Gadgil in his autobiography wrote, "While carrying on our election propaganda campaigns each of us took care not to spoil personal relationship...... In village after village meetings were held, sometimes in the same village at the same time. On such occasions Jedhe used to speak first and then came my turn. Jedhe did not canvas on caste lines anywhere. All the three of us were campaigning on a higher level". Both Jedhe and Gadgil took care to see that their personal relations were not spoiled on account of election politics and party differences. In a meeting at Lonikand, where Kakasaheb was present Jedhe scolded Kakasaheb. Two days before the polling, at 9:00 clock at night, Jedhe went to meet Mrs. Usha Alekar (Kakasaheb's Daughter). There he said, "It is a mistake that I am contesting against Kaka". A day before the polling day at night Keshavrao Jedhe went to meet Gadgil. And there he said "I unnecessarily contested this election." Then Gadgil tried to console him and told him not to feel bad.

Soon the election results were out Kakasaheb Gadgil was declared elected. He secured 1,02,692 votes and Jedhe secured 42,200, S.M. Joshi got very few votes.
Jedhe was first to garland Gadgil. Perhaps Gadgil also might have felt bad to have contested against Jedhe, because the very next day after the declaration of results, he without attending any victory procession or felicitation meeting, straight way went to Delhi.48

From Sholapur district, Shankarrao More along with Rajbhoj got elected. Two assembly seats each from North Satara District and West Khandesh and one from Belgaum district were won by the Peasants and Workers Party. And likewise, thirteen of the Peasants and Workers Party candidates were elected to the Bombay Provincial Legislature Assembly. Such PWP leaders like Bhausaheb Raut, R.K.Khadilkar, Smt. Shantabai Shankarrao More, R.M.Nalawade etc. lost the election.49

Jedhe-More- Differences

In the 1952, elections, More won but Jedhe lost. This incident told upon the future developments of the party. Jedhe began to feel that by putting up him contrary to his wishes, against Gadgil from Poona constituency, Shankarrao More made him a victim. Moreover Shankarrao More shirked from election campaign of Poona. Jedhe's friends began to feel that, More had concentrated the entire party machinery in his own constituency. So naturally Jedhe was displeased with Shankarrao More. In May 1953, in his presidential address of Purna convention of Hyderabad unit of the Peasants and Workers Party, Jedhe criticized the leadership of Shankarrao More. He took serious exceptions to the Communist inclination of the Peasants
and Workers Party and its effort for forming an alliance with the Marxist Party. He also complained that More being complacent with personal success is neglecting the party organization. As there is no guidance and no programme for the party workers they are disappointed.50

Day by day Shankarrao More was getting closer and closer to the Communist Party. Keshavrao Jedhe did not approve of the Peasants and Workers Party's attitude of co-operation with the Communist Party and seeking guidance from the 'Cominform'. Jedhe observed that the Russian or Chinese type of peasants' and workers' rule through the Communist methods is not possible in this country. Capitalism nullifies the progressive steps of the Congress and P.S.P.'s opposition to Congress is superficial. Under such circumstances the Peasants and Workers Party should maintain its separate identity. He further advised that instead of getting into an alliance with the Marxists just to acquire an 'All India' stature in name only, it should limit its field of activities to Marathi speaking province in which lie bright prospects for the party. The path laid down by Mahatma Phule is infallible and in our context the Satyashodhak direction is superior to communist direction.51 In the same way, the weekly 'Sarathi' edited by Keshavrao's nephew, S.B. Jedhe, in its issue of 3rd April 1952, siding with Keshavrao Jedhe openly criticized More. Finally their differences reached such a stage that on 17th May, 1952 Keshavrao sent his resignation of party membership to More. During these days, Madhavrao Bagal and his followers from
Kolhapur were undergoing imprisonment for taking part in Satyagraha agitation conducted by the Peasants and Workers Party. When they heard about Keshavrao's resignation a letter signed by about 80 party Satyagrahis was sent to him. They wrote, "we request you that you are a founder of the party, you are the main supporting pillar of the party. You are the ideal of lofty character, courage, straightforwardness and outspokenness, and the beloved leader of the non-Brahman masses. Because of you, many people like us joined the PWP. Your resignation has created an atmosphere of disappointment among us.... For the mistakes of some people don't let injustice befall upon us and don't desert us. You should set right the shattered party affairs".52

Similarly party workers from various other districts sent to him such letters. Likewise due to the reconciliation efforts made by R.K. Khadilkar, Yashawantrao Mohite, Barale etc. Keshavrao changed his decision to resign party membership and on 3rd August 1952 at the flag-hoisting ceremony of the party foundation-day celebrations, he declared that he would remain in the party and work for it. Despite that there was no real unity between Jedhe and More, their differences went on increasing.

Maharashtra was under the grip of a severe drought in 1952. Keshavrao took active part in relief operations. He also represented popular grievances to the government. He went from village to village consoling the peasants and also
encouraging than. He convened a number of peasant conferences. In a meeting of the drought-hit farmers at Nagargaon in Shirur Taluka, Keshavrao severely criticized the government authorities and asked the peasants to awake and present their demands to the government. As long as he was in the PWP, Keshavrao, as usual, worked for the peasant awakening and their organization and also for their welfare. But in view of the differences within party it seemed that it was not possible for Jedhe to remain in the party for long.

Sangli Convention (1953)

The differences between Jedhe and More reached a climax in the third party convention, held at Sangli on 11th June, 1953. Reactions to Jedhe's speech in the Purna Convention, echoed in Sangli convention. The committee for political affairs dominated by More's supporters had decided to introduce a resolution protesting against Jedhe for his speech and the communal writings in 'Sarathi'. However, they did not introduce it in the meeting. More had placed a very long letter under the caption, "Sanghatna Sambhandhiche Nivedan" (A note about the organization), before the convention. In it More proposed that it was not possible for the party to grow on Marxist ideological lines and so the party should be dissolved. The behaviour and activities of the party members are contradictory to the party objectives and programmes.

The purpose of the party to activise its followers to do ceaseless work was defeated and on the contrary the
the strength of its followers had swelled. The party could not do anything about its inactiveness. Its followers have become inactive, its economic conditions have deteriorated. Though the workers and leaders of the party studied Marxism, they could not understand even the basic principles of the party organization. Many, could not understand the 'Dabhadi dissertation'. They do not observe party discipline. Some of the leaders enhance their own importance. There are also increasing conflicts between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans. Through the speeches of some of the leaders intellectual dishonesty and opposition to Marxism are expressed. They value their family prestige more than the revolutionary future. Thus the note contained many such accusations. All the accusations and severe criticism were aimed at Kheshavrao.

There were serious reactions to the statement made by Shri More at the Sangli session. In a reaction to it Shri Jedhe stated that this statement was made not to purify the party but to end his (Jedhe's) political career. It would have been better if he (More) had not attempted to Malign him (Jedhe) in the name of the party. Some other leaders said that since his election to parliament Shri Shankarrao More behaved as if he was Peshwa Bajirao I. His assessment depended on personal interests. 54

Again, in the same convention, More demanded that if his resolution for dissolving the party was rejected, he should be relieved from the Party General-Secretaryship and party
should be entrusted to such workers who still believe that this party can develop further. As More's resolution of dissolution of the party was rejected he tendered his resignation of the party's General Secretaryship. Shri R.K. Khadilkar was chosen as a new party General Secretary. Keshavrao criticized More's demand of dissolution of the party. The rift among the leaders of the Peasants and Workers Party created anxiety in the minds of its supporters about the future of the party. Keshavrao demanded from More the accounts of parliamentary board and the previous accounts of the party and also of Jansatta office and the newspaper etc. This controversy went on for many days. The allegations and counter allegations between Jedhe and More continued. Nobody made efforts to end the controversy.

Soon there arose differences between R.K. Khadilkar and Shankarrao More also and went on increasing. On 9th April 1954, Keshavrao wrote a letter to Khadilkar and it was published in 'Kesari'. The allegations made in it hurt More very much. Jedhe wrote, "Till the Sangli convention, the party had a leadership which was partial, one-sided, obstinate and pretentious and as I demanded its removal, the same became angry with me." When Jedhe's letter was published, Shankarrao More was in Delhi. On his return he gave an interview to the reporter of 'Kesari' and retorted Keshavrao. He states, "Keshavrao always needs somebody's support. During the non-Brahman movement he sought Javalkar's help and later...
turned against him. During the period of 1934, he established relationship with Gadgil and later disowned him and blamed him. I came into his contact for political reasons and I also had the same experience. “Keshavrao while replying to More's interview said " More is not proper for friendship. Finally I was convinced that I had mistakenly become More's friend. More is a specimen of hypocrisy, and ungratefulness... In Maharashtra politics, there may not be any one else who became leader by merely abusing others".

In this way the allegations and counter-allegations went on increasing. Under such circumstances it was very difficult for Keshavrao to remain in the party. So on 24th April, 1954 Keshavrao submitted his resignation of his party membership to the party General Secretary R.K. Khadilkar and left the Peasants and Workers Party.

After critically assessing the then prevailing political situation anybody would accept that the ideological differences in the party had reached the climax. Shri Jedhe and Shri More who were one time colleagues had now become adversaries of each other. The Bahujan Samaj had little bit of attraction towards the party, but the leaders were unnecessarily possessed by sense of conceit. Some of the people who were under the influence of aristocratic views did not accept the progressive ideas. It gave rise to personal and ideological differences and conflicts. Those who were thinkers and intellectuals lacked the organizing skill and couldn't
take the masses with them. That led to huge controversies in the party. It also melted the energy and vigour of the party. In this context one incident needs special mention. In the 1952 elections, many candidates were put up by this party. However, only a few of them got elected. Shri Tulshidas Jadhav was one of them. He was elected as leader of the opposition in the provincial assembly. However, this leader joined the Congress in response to Morarji Desai's appeal. Those who were expected to extend their co-operation to the party during the hour of need started withdrawing their support. Under such circumstances any party's position was bound to become precarious. This party had to suffer a lot due to Shri Shankarrao More's harsh language.

The purpose with which Keshavrao Jedhe and his supporters quit the Congress and founded the Peasants and Workers Party, were not accomplished. When these people had realized that influence of the capitalists in the Congress was on the increase and that the Congress government made abnormal delays in solving problems of the Peasants and Workers and that the Congress did absolutely nothing to establish the socialist rule of the toiling masses they quit the Congress and founded the Peasants and Workers Party. So naturally the PWP leaders should have taken up some plans of constructive work and welfare programmes and implemented them in the villages to improve the lots of the peasants and workers and thereby they should have improved the image of
their party. Had they improved their party image through such programmes, the Peasants and Workers Party would have spread and developed among the people and could have functioned as a strong opposition to the Congress. But the PWP couldn't do this.

The points on which the Peasants and Workers Party had differences with the Congress were lost sight of after some time. The alliances which the Peasants and Workers Party entered into with other parties were not based on any principles but only on expediency of election politics. Jedhe was of the view that, instead of gaining an 'All India' status the Peasants and Workers Party should work for the awakening of the peasants and workers and do some constructive work for them. Then, even if the party remained limited to Maharashtra that would have been enough for him. For him work was of greater importance; while for More and others, the party was more important. Hence they were working to enhance the status of the party. Keshavrao Jedhe's leadership was native to the soil and he had a very large following. The party should have availed itself of this leadership. But Jedhe did not get sufficient support from his colleagues. Instead of the party leadership was given to an egoistic man like Shankarrao More.

More by nature was self-centered. He wanted party leadership for himself. He expected others to behave according to his wishes. Because of his pro-communist policies and authoritarian outlook, More failed to organize the party.
Instead, his nature and attitude hurt many people and caused disintegration of the party. More's was an intellectual leadership. He lacked contacts with the masses. Hence he could not lead the party taking with him all the party workers. He followed a narrow path in his political activities. If Jedhe were invested with the party leadership, the Peasants and Workers Party could have availed itself of his popularity and could have emerged stronger. However, More's leadership always tried to sidetrack Jedhe. When he noticed that the Peasants and Workers Party is drifting away from its ideals and policies and not carrying out any constructive programmes Jedhe began to criticize the party leadership. This led to the further rift between More and Jedhe and weakened the party.

When Jedhe was convinced that this party would not do anything to achieve its aims and objectives, he resigned the party membership.
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